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A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES AT AMIGA FORMAT

45 Backstage

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER - FOR SUBSCRIBERS

The staff they are a changin'



No sooner does Steve Jarratt take the helm than Rob Mead and Richard Baguley abandon the Good Ship Format.

Welcome once again to *Backstage* – your personal guide to the behind-the-scenes activities of *Amiga Format*.

It's been all change again this month – no sooner do I assume command, than I have two mutineers on my hands. Richard Baguley has been appointed editor of *AF*'s sister mag, *Amiga Shopper*, and Rob Mead, *AF*'s sultry games ed, has jumped ship completely to work on – get this – *Practical Caravan*. Not *Practical Amiga User's Caravan* or *Amiga Owners Go Caravanning Monthly* or even *Caravans-With-Amigas-In-Them Action*. Takes all sorts... Still, our best wishes go with them both.

But what of the empty desks sitting formally in the *Amiga Format* office, I hear you cry. Fear not, for their replacements are already well under way. Baggers' seat has been filled by the prodigal tech-head Jason Holborn. Jason was with *Amiga Format* from launch to issue 11, at which point he and *AF*

parted company so he could pursue a freelance career. But after years of flitting from job to job, writing for all and sundry, he has once again sought the solace of a busy office, steady income and on-site coffee preparation facilities. Jason will be helping Nick Veitch maintain and improve *AF*'s already superb Seriously Amiga section.

Rob's replacement has yet to be finalised, but we've been inundated with enquiries and I'm sure we'll find someone to carry on his excellent work in Screen Play.

Sick of sitting on my own in the corridor, I persuaded the team to rearrange the *AF* offices. *Amiga Shopper* have been summarily booted out, giving us all enough room to swing several cats all tied together.

I've now taken prime position in the corner, surrounded by my generals (Jules and Nick) and the lord of all I survey. Perhaps I'll even turn my desk around so I can see the rest of the office...

Sadly, this also means that I'm now well within earshot of the *AF* ghetto blaster, which lives on a constant diet of truly dreadful music, including Stephen Bradley's extensive collection of Gilbert O'Sullivan hits. I've already written to the Samaritans and Amnesty International.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF ▶

ISSUE SIXTY-ONE
JULY '94

What I do!



Richard Jones –
Production
Editor

Richard Jones takes you through the seamless process that takes *AF* from the drawing board, around the office a few times and to the printers...

A magazine Production Editor is the dynamic organiser and motivator at the hub of the team, or at least that's what it says in the job description.

In practice being a Prod Ed means nagging writers and artists to get on with their work and listening warily to their pathetic excuses when they don't. The next stage in the process involves being nagged by the production department to get the pages out and making pathetic excuses to them about why they're late.

Actually the nagging and pathetic excuses only really start in deadline week, the rest of the time we're just one big happy family. Here's how we amuse ourselves over the four week production lifespan of a typical issue of *Amiga Format*.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF ▶

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Subscriber Superdisk

Issue 61 • July 1994

Richard Baguley scours the Public Domain to bring you a selection of the best games and utilities.

ON THIS MONTH'S DISK...

On this month's subscriber's disk, we have the following fabulous programs and files:

GRAVITY FORCE 2 - A truly marvellous two-player shoot-em-up

PRINTCHEAPER - Cut down on paper waste by using both sides.

SMILEY - learn the meaning of those strange smileys in messages :-).

CBMTYPES* - A collection of new datatypes from Commodore.

IMAGINE 3 Patch - Bug fix for the latest version of Imagine.

SNOW - Seasonal(?) Workbench hack.

MAINACTOR - Excellent animation and sound compiler and player.

*Workbench 2 or above only

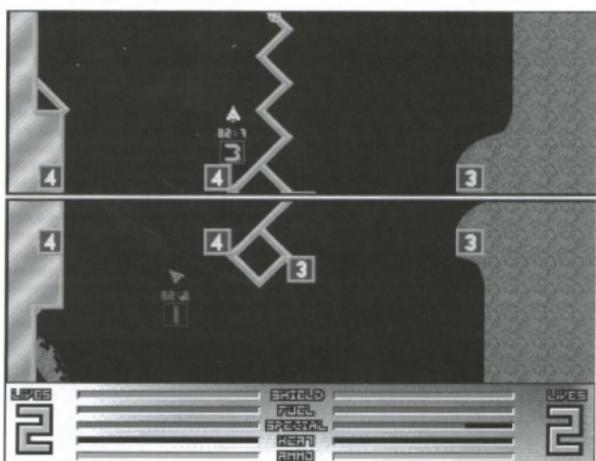
An excellent two-player shoot-em-up, *Gravity Force 2* is one of those games with an extra something that keeps you coming back for more... and more. The basic idea is simple: you and your opponent just have to fly around attempting to shoot each other for no particular reason.

This would be a fairly simple exercise if it wasn't for the presence of gravity, which drags you down in the sort of way that only gravity can. If you hit any of the walls or the floor and you're dead.

Your ship is equipped with a laser (press the joystick forward to fire) and a thruster (press the fire button) and you also have a special weapon (pull the joystick back) which you can pick from a comprehensive list including such delights as free-fall bombs, guided missiles or triple auto-cannons.

It's a bit difficult at first learning how to control your ship, but you'll soon get the hang of it and be zooming around the screen like a mad thing with laserbolts and bombs flying all over the place.

There are about 40 levels including several race levels where the aim is to get through a series of points in the minimum amount of time. As you'd expect, it's still considered acceptable to shoot the other player in the spirit of friendly competition as long as you smile while you're doing it.



It's a race against time in *Gravity Force 2*. Who will be blasted into a ball of radioactive gunk first?

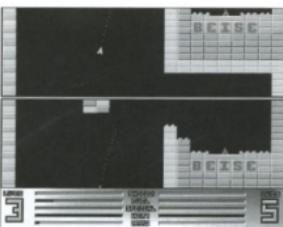
On a less trigger-happy note, *MainActor* is an animation player and compiler, but it differs from players such as *PPanim* or *Viewtek* in that you can also add sound to your animation and load or save it as single frames. *MainActor* also has the advantage of being able to read in or save out FLI or FLC files created on lesser computers such as PCs.

The animations can be composed of either anim files produced by programs such as *DPaint* or single images, or you can combine them to form complete animations.

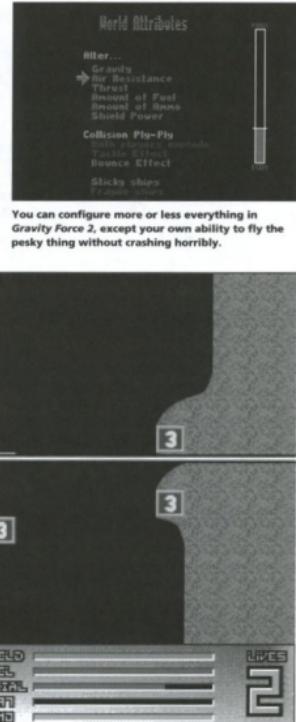
The first thing you need to do is to get *MainActor* up and running is to set up an assign which tells the program where it is. If you have put *MainActor* on to your hard disk (called, for instance, Arthur) in a directory called Actor, you would enter the following line or add it to your startup sequence:

GETTING STARTED

This disk is not bootable, so to access the programs, boot up your Amiga with the *Subscriber Superdisk*. To pack on a large number of files, we've compressed them using Stefan Boberg's *LHA* program. Click on the appropriate icon to start a script which will decompress the programs and files to the RAM disk. You can run them from there, or copy them to another disk.



If the *Gravity Force 2* racing tracks aren't to your taste, how about a bit of senseless violence?

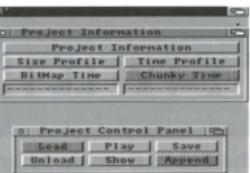
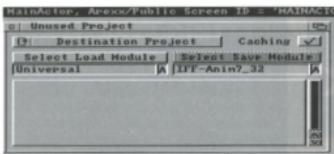


ASSIGN MAINACTOR: ARTHUR:ACTOR

MainActor is far too complex a program to be explained in any great detail here, but fortunately it comes with some excellent documentation, which includes a tutorial to show you how to get started and use your own images and samples.

Those of you who took advantage of our *Imagine* upgrade offer from the Coverdisk of Issue 53 should have received, or should be receiving shortly, your copy of *Imagine 3*.

However, Impulse have already identified a minor bug with the program, which *Imagine 3 Patch* will fix. The bug means that ground objects don't show up properly in reflections when rendered in Trace Mode. It's only a minor glitch, but it could be irritating. Anyway, running the Amiga patch program



If you look carefully at Snow, you can see Santa Claus flying across your screen, delivering RAM chips to all the good boys and girls.

PRTCHEAPER S: STARTUP-SEQUENCE EP HD

If you then put the pages back into the paper feeder (but upside down) and change EP to OP, it prints out the odd pages on the reverse side of the paper. For more details, check the document which tells you about more options for controlling PrintCheaper.

The *Smiley* program is particularly useful if you are interested in any form of electronic mail. If you are, you have probably already come across smileys. These are ways of visually expressing emotions such as joy, sadness or annoyance in text-only messages by adding characters such as :-), -(- or /:-/. Turn the page on its side to see what I mean.

Over the years, people have come up with several hundred variations on this theme, including such gems as :-#) (mustachioed smiley), +0-) (happy pope) and q-) (smiley with baseball hat).

This program contains a comprehensive list of smileys, and typing 'smiley' in the Shell provides you with a random one. Alternatively, you can generate a list by typing 'smiley -l'. You can also find out the meaning of a particular smiley you aren't sure about by putting it in an environment variable called 'smile' and typing 'smiley -e'.

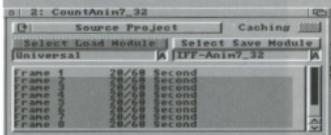
The full source code for the *Smiley* program is also included, so it's not a completely frivolous affair. *Smiley* was originally designed for use on Unix platforms, so it's also a good example of how to code in C for different computer platforms.

I know it's not quite seasonal, but I couldn't resist putting this gem on the Subscriber's Superside. *Snow* is an excellent screen hack by Markus Illenseer which brings up a window filled with Christmas trees, falling snow and reindeer. The sun may be shining outside, but you can remind yourself of the joys of Christmas with this rather nice program. You can even control the amount of snowflakes on the screen or whether it uses a window or the screen backdrop.

If you have any suggestions, comments or programs that you would like to see on the subscribers' disk, please write to:

Jason Hoborn
Amiga Format Subscribers Disk
Future Publishing
30 Monmouth Street
Bath
Avon BA1 2BW

Or try the E-Mail addresses:
2:250/107.95(Fidonet)
AMFORMAT@IX.COMLINK.CO.UK
(Internet, Janet)



(c) Markus Hoenig
for the Amiga version



MainActor is a powerful and complex animation player that enables you to add sound to your animations.

corrects the program to get around this. To install the patch, copy the file Im3FixAm into your Imagine directory and type Im3FixAm in the shell.

CBMDtypes is a collection of new datatypes, which you can use with the Workbench 3 program *Multiview* to view images in X-Bitmap format (as used on many high-end workstations) and listen to sound files produced on Sun computers.

There is also an enhanced version of the pictures datatype, which has greatly improved colour mapping, which is extremely useful if you are trying to display pictures which are in a different number of colours to the Workbench screen.

PrintCheaper is one of those incredibly simple ideas which makes life easier and in this case also saves you money and paper. The program enables you to print on both sides of a sheet of paper by splitting text files into even and odd pages, so you can print out the odd pages on to one side of the paper and the even pages on the other which can't be bad news for all the worried trees out there.

PrintCheaper has to be run from the CLI, and you can add a variety of options to the command line to control how the file is printed. For instance, if you want to print out the even pages of your startup sequence with a header giving the page number, type in the following line:

```
PRTCHEAPER S: STARTUP-SEQUENCE EP HD
```

```
tearful
crying
curly hair
no hair
man
only has a left eye, which is closed
accidentally shaved off one of his eyebrows this morning
unspecified 4-legged critter
need a haircut
wearing a beret
Hustonian
wrote a book from Tektronix
left-handed
Siamese twins
secretive hillbilly [jeanettebrandwax]
Impatiently Fighter ("Star Wars")
noticing you
wear glasses
big nose
glasses, mustache and a beard
likes to scuba dive
extremely tall
big nose
frowning
man smiling and I have braces (watch out for the glare!)
something he shouldn't have
frown
frowning
unsure
tiny face
surprise
wearing bicycle helmet
kissing
broken
blabber mouth
GRRY sad
big nose
formerly attired
two noses (5)
the hands up!
eyebrow
your padding!
pacman champion
BoboCop
Cheetah cat
scuba smiley big-face
unfriendly big-face
smiley big-face
schizophrenic
```

If you need to know the meaning of a weird smiley look no further than the informative *Smiley* program.